



HANDOUT-ABLE: A Letter to the Listener from a Communicator with Cerebellar Ataxia, a Communication Difficulty

Hello sir or madam:

I have difficulty communicating. I currently exhibit a disability, which affects my ability to speak in the manner most people do. This is not a reflection on my worth or value. I ask that you keep the following in mind as we communicate:

- My speech is slurred due to a medical condition. I have techniques to help me speak clearer, and I utilize these -- every time I talk. I will need some considerations from you, however.
- What I say is important -- just like what you say is important.
- I need extra time and patience from you. I would do the same to you if you needed me to, just please let me know -- and I will do everything I can.
- It may take different types of avenues to have a message understood. This does not take away the value of the message, and it does not take away my value as a person.
- Everyone in their own way communicates differently, and every person has different needs that help with the process. My needs are just not as common as what you may see every day.
- I have a need to be heard. I have valuable messages to communicate.
- If you show me the time and consideration that I need so that I can effectively communicate with you, it will show me your integrity and compassion. It might be you someday. It might be someone you intensely care about someday. Please keep this in mind as there may be challenges that come along; challenges are just another detour that will get us to where we need to go. I have information that will be helpful to you. I have beneficial information to contribute.
- It will assist the communication process if you ask as many questions as you need. Please keep them short. It is easier for me to answer simple, short questions. Also, please try to not interrupt me, and I will try to not do the same with you. This includes when I am formulating a message.
- If possible, please advocate for me in situations that I currently cannot navigate. Thank you in advance.
- We all need help to different degrees sometimes. Please demonstrate compassion by putting yourself in my shoes -- and show me the respect you would desire. If you appreciate our interaction like it was you in this situation, it might open your eyes to something new.
- We may be different, but we can still communicate.
- If someone disrespects me, please speak up. I will do the same for you in any capacity I can.
- I understand that your attempts may not be perfect -- that is okay. Mine might not be either. We are still working on it!
- Other tips that will help us communicate: _____

--Thank you, from a Person who has difficulties with speaking, due to cerebellar ataxia